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Claims:

1.   A method of operating an on-line retailing operation for retailing of at least one print product to a customer, said print product supplied by a print merchant operation, said method comprising the steps of:

displaying a plurality of image items for remote viewing by said customer;

transacting an order of a first type with said customer for supply of said at least one print product;

transacting an order of a second type with said print merchant for fulfillment of said first type order.

2.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transacting an order of a first type comprises:

receiving a specification of said print products from said customer, said specification comprising data selected from the set,

media size;

media type;

number of copies;

delivery name;

delivery address;

ink type.

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3.   The method as claimed in claim 2, wherein said step of transacting an order of a first type comprises receiving a specification of said print products from a customer terminal, in the form of an electronically transmitted data file.

4.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transacting an order of a second type comprises the steps:

sending an order to said print merchant, specifying details of said print products; and

receiving confirmation of said order from said print merchant.

5.   The method as claimed in claim 3, wherein said step of sending an order to a said print merchant comprises sending said order in the form of an electronically transmitted data file.

6.   The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of:

receiving a price data from said print merchant.

7.   The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of:

obtaining an electronic image data describing a said image item, said electronic image data obtained via a communications network; and

electronically sending said electronic image data to said print merchant.

8.   The method as claimed in claim 1, further comprising the step of:

storing an electronic contract data describing a contract between a content retailer operation and a print merchant operation.

9.   The method as claimed in claim 8 wherein said contract defines a relationship between said content retailer operation and said print merchant operation in respect of at least one of the following parameters;

a definition of a print product;

a special discount available to a content retailer operation;

a plurality of prices for said print products.

10.   The method as claimed in claim 8 comprising the step of calculating a price data according to said stored electronic contract.

11.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transacting an order of a second type with a said print merchant, comprises:

itemizing separately, for each of a plurality of print service providers;

a delivery price for delivery from said print service provider to a delivery address; and

a print price, for printing at least one print product, defined in said second order type.

12.   The method as claimed in claim 1, wherein said step of transacting an order of a first type with said customer comprises:

for each of a plurality of print products:

displaying a print product price; and

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displaying a separately itemized delivery cost for delivery of said print product.

13.   An on-line image content retailer operation, said on-line image content retailer operation comprising at least one computer entity capable of:

displaying a plurality of image items for remote viewing by a plurality of customer terminals;

transacting orders of a first type for supply of print products with at least one said customer terminal;

transacting orders of a second type for sourcing fulfillment of a said first type order, with at least one print merchant.

14.   The content retailer operation as claimed in claim 13, wherein said step of transacting orders of a second type include transfer of price information, in which a delivery price is itemized separately from a print price for printing a plurality of print products.

15.   The content retailer operation as claimed in claim 13, wherein said computer entity further operates to:

store an electronic contract data defining a contract between said content retailer operation and said print merchant operation.

16.   At least one computer entity capable of:

displaying a plurality of image items for remote viewing by a plurality of customer terminals;

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transacting orders of a first type for supply of print products with at least one said customer terminal;

5   transacting orders of a second type for sourcing fulfillment of a said first type order, with at least one print merchant.

17.   A method of operating a print service provider facility comprising:

10   receiving an electronic order for a plurality of print products;

receiving electronically an image content data; and

transferring electronically said image content to a printer device, and
15 printing an image content onto a print media to produce said print product in fulfillment of said order.

18.   The method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the step of:

20   acknowledging receipt of said order by generation of an on-line message.

19.   The method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

. generating a tracking message describing a status of production of said
25 order within said print service provider; and

making said tracking message available on-line.

20.   The method as claimed in claim 17, further comprising the steps of:
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arranging shipping of said print products to a delivery address specified in said order, by sending an electronic shipping message to a courier operation.

21.   A method of operating a print merchant operation for matching a plurality of orders of a first type for print products, with a plurality of print service provider operations capable of fulfilling said order, said method comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for an order identification;

issuing an order identification in response to said request;

receiving a said order of a second type for supply of print products;

acknowledging said order;

selecting a print service provider operation from said plurality of print service provider operations;

placing an order of a third type with at least one said selected print service provider, for ordering supply of said print products.

22.   The method as claimed in claim 21 further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request for a quotation for fulfilling said second type order;

generating a quotation for fulfilling said second type order;

sending said quotation for fulfilling said first type order to a remote computer entity.

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23.   The method as claimed in claim 21 further comprising the steps of:

receiving a tracking message from said selected print service provider, containing data describing a status of printed products subject of said send type
5   order; and

making said tracking message available to a computer entity originating said first type order.

10   24.   The method as claimed in claim 21 further comprising the steps of:

issuing a request to a remote computer entity, for download of image data content from said remote computer entity; and

15   receiving said image data content in response to said request.

25.   The method as claimed in claim 21 wherein in response to said event of receiving a said order of a second type, carrying out the steps of:

20   checking a time stamp of an identification code of said order against a predetermined timeout period;

if said time stamp is expired, rejecting said order;

25   if said time stamp is expired, notifying a sender of said order that said time stamp is invalid.

26.   The method as claimed in claim 21, further comprising the step of:

30   storing in a database, an electronic contract defining a relationship between said print merchant operation, and a content retailer operation.

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27.   The method as claimed in claim 21 comprising the step of:

5   determining a quote to a content retailer operation in accordance with said stored electronic contract between said content retailer operation and said print merchant operation.

28.   The method as claimed in claim 21, further comprising the step of:

10   storing an electronic contract data defining a contract between said print merchant operation, and a print service provider operation.

29.   The method as claimed in claim 28, wherein said step of selecting a print service provider operation from said plurality of print service provider 15 operations is carried out by selecting a said print service provider operation on the basis of said stored electronic contract data between said print merchant operation and said print service provider operation.

30.   The method as claimed in claim 21, wherein said step of selecting a 20 print service provider operation from said plurality of print service provider operations comprises:

selecting a said print service provider on the basis of a final price, where the final price is itemized as a print price and a delivery price.

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31.   At least one computer entity configured for:

receiving electronically, a plurality of orders of a second type, for supply of at least one print product;

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selecting a print service provider operation from a plurality of print service provider operations; and

placing at least one order of a third type with at least one selected said print service provider for ordering supply of said at least one print product.

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